

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 073155
ORIGIN NEA-10

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DRAFTED BY NEA/RA:RWHOBBS:NEA/ARP:JRCOUNTRYMAN
APPROVED BY NEA/RA:JRCHEEK
NEA/ARP:JWTTWINAM
PM/SAS:CPT. NOTARGIOCOMO

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R 021838Z APR 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 073155

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS,SA

SUBJECT: RELEASE OF SKYGUARD/SPARROW TECH DATA

1. IN AUGUST 1976 RAYTHEON REQUESTED RELEASE OF TECH DATA ON SKYGUARD/SPARROW MISSILE SYSTEM TO SAG. DEPARTMENT DISAPPROVED BECAUSE, AMONG OTHER REASONS, WE DID NOT DETECT ANY SAUDI INTEREST. RAYTHEON HAS COME BACK TO US NOW CLAIMING THAT AIR DEFENSE PROJECT OFFICER MAJOR KHALED BIN SULTAN AND AD COMMANDER, COLONEL MANSUR, HAVE REQUESTED BRIEFING ON SKYGUARD/SPARROW SYSTEM.

2. SKYGUARD/SPARROW SYSTEM IS JOINT RAYTHEON/CONTRAVES (SWISS) EFFORT TO COMBINE SKYGUARD ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN SYSTEM WITH SPARROW MISSILE FOR POINT DEFENSE OF FIXED SITES. CONTRAVES COULD SUPPLY SKYGUARD SYSTEM WITH OTHER, NON-US, MISSILE IF NOT SUPPLIED BY RAYTHEON.

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3. IN JUSTIFYING PROPOSED SALE, RAYTHEON CONTENDS IT P R F E R A B L E THAT U.S. CONTRACTOR CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND ADVICE FOR AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA. COMPANY ALSO MAINTAINS THAT LAND SPARROW IS NATURAL EVOLUTION FROM SEA SPARROW WHICH HAS BEEN USED IN POINT DEFENSE OF SHIPS BY U.S. NAVY FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY SEVERAL OTHER NAVIES. LAND SPARROW SYSTEM HAS

BEEN FULLY TESTED IN SWITZERLAND, BUT IS NOT RPT NOT IN PLACE IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY. ALL COMPONENTS ARE ALREADY BEING PRODUCED AND SYSTEM COULD BE PUT INTO PRODUCTION QUICKLY. SYSTEM IS NOT PLANNED FOR USE BY U.S. FORCES BECAUSE WE HAVE OPTED FOR THE ROLAND SYSTEM FOR SAKE OF NATO COMMONALTY. RAYTHEON CLAIMS THAT SINCE THE SYSTEM IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN, THERE SHOULD BE NO APPRECIABLE SUPPORT PROBLEMS FOR RAYTHEON AND SAG PERSONNEL NOW SUPPORTING HAWK. MANY SIMILARITIES EXIST BETWEEN HAWK AND SPARROW, AND MANY OF RAYTHEON PERSONNEL NOW INVOLVED IN HAWK HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE WITH SPARROW. RAYTHEON NOTES THAT HAWK AND SPARROW ARE NOT COMPETITIVE SYSTEMS IN LAND ROLE. SKYGUARD/SPARROW IS SHORT-RANGE, QUICK-REACTION SYSTEM LIMITED TO POINT DEFENSE, WHILE LONG-RANGE HAWK PROVIDES AREA DEFENSE.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THIS REQUEST AND A POSSIBLE SALE:

A. FACT THAT SAUDI AIR DEFENSE OFFICERS HAVE REQUESTED BRIEFING DOES NOT IN OUR VIEW CONSTITUTE FIRM HIGH-LEVEL INTEREST. APPRECIATE CLOSE SAG/RAYTHEON RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE ARE NOT AWARE MODA HAS OFFICIALLY REQUESTED BRIEFINGS THROUGH EMBASSY OR USMTM.

B. FACT SYSTEM HAS NOT BEEN IN OPERATION ANYWHERE ELSE DISTURBS US, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF LIMITED SAUDI ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF EVEN WELL-TRIED AND TESTED
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SYSTEMS.

C. WE ARE ENCOUNTERING SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS WITH THE CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC AT LARGE IN RELATION TO THE EXISTING HAWK PROGRAM WHICH IS ONE ALREADY IN BEING AND ONE FOR WHOSE NON-TRANSFER ABILITY AND NON-OFFENSIVE USE IN SAUDI CONFIGURATION WE CAN MAKE CONVINCING ARGUMENTS. IN THIS CLIMATE, WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IMPACT ON DOMESTIC OPINION THAT REQUEST FOR SKYGUARD/SPARROW WOULD HAVE GIVEN ITS GREATER INHERENT MOBILITY.

5. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS SYSTEM AND JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER WE SHOULD RELEASE TECH DATA ON IT TO THE SAG AT THIS TIME.
VANCE

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